

No. XXIII.—WOODPECKER OCCUPYING NESTING BOX.

Early in the spring this year I prepared a number of nesting boxes, in hopes of attracting birds, especially tits or nuthatches, and of inducing them to breed in my compound in Pachmarhi. The boxes were constructed as follows :

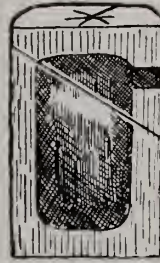
*Diagrams to illustrate method of construction of —
nesting-boxes.*



FRONT ELEVATION.



SIDE ELEVATION.



SECTION.

Cylindrical sections of a young tree, about 9 inches in diameter with the bark on and about 15 inches in length were prepared with a cross cut saw. Each such cylinder was then cut across again, diagonally, into two unequal halves as shown in the diagram, the smaller half to constitute the lid of the nesting box.

Both halves were then hollowed out with a stout auger and gouge, giving a cylindrical hollow 5 inches or so in diameter and 10 or 11 inches long, a thickness of 2 inches being left at top and bottom of the cavity.

A circular hole $1\frac{1}{4}$ inches in diameter was then bored through the longer side of the lid section, communicating with the central hollow.

Two stout headless nails were then driven into the margin of the lower half of the cylinder on opposite sides of the hollow and in a vertical position protruding about an inch above the level of the surface of the wood, and two corresponding holes were bored with a gimlet in the rim, at the base of the lid portion. The lid could now be firmly fitted into the basal portion of the cylinder and could be easily removed and replaced again with no danger of its falling off.

The nesting boxes were then hung up against the trunks of trees about 15 ft. from the ground, with entrance hole facing outwards. This was done early in February. Towards the end of February a pair of Golden Backed Woodpeckers (*Brachypternus aurantius*) became interested in one of the boxes; but the entrance hole having been made small (to exclude mynahs) they set to work to enlarge it. Eventually they enlarged the hole to $2\frac{1}{4}$ inches diameter and finding the cavity inside quite suitable for nesting purposes they adopted it without further excavation.

On March 9th the nest contained 3 fresh eggs, pure white of course but pink from translucence. Incubation commenced the same day.

From this date onwards I examined the nest daily and the birds gradually became accustomed to my visits. They always left the nesting box, however, on my commencing to climb the tree. The following notes are from my diary.

March 19th Eggs not yet chipped.

„ 20th All three eggs hatched. The young are quite naked. The upper mandibles are tipped with a conspicuous white shining scale.

- A similar but smaller scale is present on the tips of the lower mandibles. One of the young birds opened its mouth for food and made the characteristic rattling sound of young wood-peckers.
- March 21st No important change. Nestlings still quiet naked but stronger. The elbows of the legs have a peculiar swollen comb-like serrated appearance behind.
- „ 22nd Birds still naked. One is only about half the size of the others.
- „ 23rd No great change.
- „ 24th Only two birds in the nest. The small one must have died and been removed by the parents.
- „ 25th Young birds growing rapidly. Otherwise no change.
- „ 26th „ „ „
- „ 27th Eyes just opening. Also „ feathers and quills „ just beginning to show.
- „ 28th Feathers developing, especially a curious band or strip across the thigh.
- „ 29th Further development.
- „ 30th A tinge of red appearing on crown.
- „ 31st to April 3rd. Steady development in feathering.
- April 4th Red caps and orange backs conspicuous.
- „ 5th to 8th Gradual full development of feather tracts. Birds very noisy.
- „ 9th Both birds left the nest.

The nest box cavity was not enlarged by the parent birds. It was throughout kept scrupulously clean. This surprised me as I always understood that the removal of the feces of the young was performed by Passerine birds only.

No droppings or dirt of any kind were found in the nest until the last day before the birds left the nest.

The young never returned to the nest after leaving it.

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No. XXIV.—NOTES ON THE NESTING OF THE HIMALAYAN TREE CREEPER (*CERTHIA HIMALAYANA*).

The following note on the nesting of the Himalayan Tree Creeper (*Certhia himalayana*) may be of interest. Blanford, in the Fauna of British India, and also Hume, in Nests and Eggs, state this bird nests high up in tall trees, 40' to 50' from the ground. I have found three nests of this bird here, and they have all been quite low down near the ground. It is an early breeder, March and April, at least they must commence building in March. I had no experience of this bird's habits, so judging from the above authors' notes I spent hours watching them in hopes of discovering their nests, but failed to see them breeding till by accident I discovered the nest.

On the 19th April I was sitting in the shade of a pine tree, when two creepers flew on to the next tree, each with an insect in its bill. They were much excited, peeping at me round the trunk of the pine, then one bolder than the other, flew down to the tree I sat near, and disappeared round the trunk. A few seconds later it went off without the insect, and shortly after the second bird did the same; when they had left I examined the trunk and found a large piece of the bark was detached from the stem, and on touching this to look behind, it came away disclosing the nest of 3 nearly full grown young ones. They all flew out, and there was also one adled egg. I replaced one chick, the only one I could find. The nest was situated only 2 ft. from the ground and composed of a few